

**MIXED MATRIX VANADIUM OXIDE CATALYTIC NANOCOMPOSITE
MEMBRANE FOR STYRENE OXIDATION**

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENT	iv
LIST OF TABLE	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
LIST OF PLATES	xxi
LIST OF ABBREVIATION	xxiii
LIST OF SYMBOLS	xxv
ABSTRAK	xxvi
ABSTRACT	xxviii
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Membrane Technology	1
1.2 Application of Catalyst to Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Reaction	2
1.3 Nanoparticles Catalysis	4
1.4 Common Nanoparticle Supports	4
1.4.1 Metal Oxide Supports	5
1.4.2 Carbonaceous Supports	5
1.4.3 Polymer Supports	6
1.4.4 Porous membranes as catalyst supports	6
1.5 Membranes Reactors	7
1.5.1 Retainment of Homogeneous Catalysts	8
1.5.2 Membrane Reactors for the Preferential Removal of a Species (Membrane Extractors)	9
1.5.3 Membrane Reactor for Distributed Addition of a Reactant (Membrane Distributors)	10

1.5.4	Membrane Reactors for Control of Reactant Contact (Membrane Contactors)	11
1.5.4(a)	Interfacial Contactors	12
1.5.4(b)	Flow-Through Contactors	13
1.6	Benzaldehyde synthesis and Application	15
1.7	Problem Statement	16
1.8	Research Objectives	20
1.9	Scope of the Study	20
1.9.1	Synthesis and Characterization of Nanocomposite Catalyst	20
1.9.2	Synthesis and characterization of Mixed Matrix Vanadium oxide Catalytic Nanocomposite Membrane	21
1.9.3	Design and Fabrication of Liquid Permeation membrane Test Rig	21
1.9.4	Kinetic study	21
1.10	Organization of the Thesis	22
	CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW	24
2.1	Hydrocarbons	24
2.2	Selective Oxidation of Hydrocarbons	25
2.3	Hydrogen Peroxide	28
2.4	Oxidation of Hydrocarbon with Hydrogen Peroxide	29
2.5	Nanotechnology and Nanostructured Materials by Template Synthesis	29
2.6	Different Template Type Used for Catalyst Preparation	30
2.6.1	Track-Etch Membrane	30
2.6.2	Porous Anodic Aluminum Oxide (AAO) Membrane	30

2.6.3	Porous Polymeric Materials	31
2.7	Deposition Strategies for Preparing Nanostructured Materials	31
2.7.1	Sol-Gel Deposition	32
2.7.2	Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD)	33
2.8	Atomic and Physical Properties of Vanadium	34
2.8.1	Nano-Scale Vanadium Oxides	35
2.8.1(a)	Hydrothermal synthesis of vanadium oxide nanotube	36
2.9	The Importance of Vanadium in Heterogeneous Catalysis	38
2.10	The Importance of Different Catalysts in Styrene Oxidation and the benchmarking with other catalyst	40
2.11	The Importance of Vanadium in Styrene Oxidation	41
2.12	Catalytic Membrane in Oxidation and Epoxidation	42
2.13	Catalytic Membrane in Styrene Oxidation	48
2.14	Functionalization of Carbon Nanotubes	50
2.15	Wet Chemistry Method of Filling Nanotubes	51
2.16	Summary	52
CHAPTER 3 - MATERIALS AND METHODS		53
3.1	Introduction	53
3.2	Materials and Chemicals	53
3.3	Synthesis of Catalysts and Membrane	53
3.3.1	Syntheses of Catalyst Nanoparticles and Reaction Procedure	55
3.3.1(a)	Synthesis of Vanadium Oxide Nanotubes Via an Ultrasonic Method	55
3.3.1(b)	Preparation of γ -Al ₂ O ₃ Nanoparticles	57

3.3.1(c)	Preparation of Catalyst $V_xO_y/\gamma-Al_2O_3$	58
3.3.1(d)	Reaction Procedure for the Oxidation of Styrene with $V_xO_y/\gamma-Al_2O_3$ Catalyst	58
3.3.1(e)	Catalytic Activity Determination for the Oxidation of Styrene with $V_xO_y/\gamma-Al_2O_3$ Catalyst with the Adsorption of Reaction Water by Anhydrous $MgSO_4$	60
3.3.1(f)	Pretreatment of MWCNTs	60
3.3.1(g)	Preparation of V_xO_y - CNTs Catalysts	61
3.3.1(h)	Preparation of V_xO_y - CNTs- Coated by $\gamma-Al_2O_3$ Catalysts	61
3.3.1(i)	Preparation of Anhydrous Hydrogen Peroxide	62
3.3.2	Preparation of Membrane and Reaction Procedure	62
3.3.2(a)	Preparation of Alumina Pellet Support	62
3.3.2(b)	Preparation of $AlOOH$ Sol (Boehmite sol)	63
3.3.2(c)	Preparation of $AlOOH$ Sol with V_xO_y -CNTs- Catalysts by Addition of PVA Following Peptization	63
3.3.2(d)	Preparation of $AlOOH$ Sol with V_xO_y -CNTs Catalysts by Addition of PVA or PVA+PEG Prior to Peptization	64
3.3.2(e)	Preparation of $AlOOH$ Sol with V_xO_y -NTs Catalysts by Addition of Mixture of PVA/PEG Prior to Peptization	64
3.3.2(f)	Preparation of $AlOOH$ Sol with V_xO_y Catalysts by Addition of Mixture of PVA/PEG Prior to Peptization	65
3.3.2(g)	Coating of Mixed Matrix Catalytic Membrane	65
3.3.2(h)	Styrene Oxidation: Experimental Set-Up and Analysis	66
3.4	Liquid permeation Membrane Test Rig Setup	66
3.4.1	Setup Instruction	68
3.4.2	Reactor Assembly	69
3.5	Process Study Using Liquid Permeation Membrane Test Rig	70

3.5.1	Operating Steps	73
3.6	Product Analysis	73
3.7	Characterization of Catalyst and Membrane	74
3.7.1	X-Ray Diffraction (XRD) Analysis	75
3.7.2	_Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) and Energy Dispersive X-ray Microanalysis (EDX)	76
3.7.3	Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM)	76
3.7.4	Thermal Gravimetric Analysis (TGA)	77
3.7.5	Fourier Transformed Infrared (FT-IR) Spectroscopy	77
3.7.6	Nitrogen Adsorption-Desorption Measurement	77
3.7.7	Zeta Potential and Particle Size of Al ₂ O ₃	78
3.8	Statistical Analysis of Data	78
3.8.1	Non-linear Mode	79
3.8.2	Design of Experiments (DOE)	81
3.9	Kinetic Study of Styrene Oxidation	82
CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS AND DISCUSSION		86
4.1	Preparation & Characterization and Reaction of Catalysts	86
4.1.1	Vanadium Oxide Nanotubes (V _x O _y - NTs) Catalyst	86
4.1.1(a)	<u>Effect of Ultrasonic</u>	86
4.1.1(b)	Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM)	88
4.1.1(c)	Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM)	90
4.1.1(d)	X-Ray Diffraction (X-ray)	92
4.1.1(e)	Fourier Transformed Infrared (FT-IR) Spectroscopy	92

4.1.1(f)	Thermal Gravimetric Analysis (TGA) for Checking Thermal Stability	93
4.1.1(g)	Nitrogen Adsorption-Desorption Measurement	94
4.1.1(h)	Stability Test on Vanadium Oxide Nanotubes (V_xO_y - NTs) Catalyst	95
4.1.2	$V_xO_y/\gamma-Al_2O_3$ Nanoparticles Catalyst	96
4.1.2(a)	Nitrogen Adsorption-Desorption Measurement	96
4.1.2(b)	Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM)	98
4.1.2(c)	X-Ray Diffraction (XRD)	98
4.1.2(d)	Energy Dispersive X-ray Microanalysis (EDX)	99
4.2.1	Application of $V_xO_y/\gamma-Al_2O_3$ Catalyst for styre oxidation	100
4.2.1(a)	Model fitting and ANOVA	100
4.2.1(b)	Effect of Catalyst Concentration on Styrene Conversion	104
4.2.1(c)	Effect of Various Reaction Times on Styrene Conversion	105
4.2.1(d)	Effect of H_2O_2 Concentration on Styrene Conversion	105
4.2.1(e)	Effect of Different Reaction Temperatures on Styrene Conversion	110
4.2.1(f)	Optimization of styrene oxidation	114
4.2.1(g)	The Effect of Water on the Oxidation Reaction	114
4.2.1(h)	Solvent Effect	115
4.2.2	Oxidation of Styrene by Anhydrous Hydrogen Peroxide on $V_xO_y/\gamma-Al_2O_3$ Nanoparticle Catalysts with water removal	116
4.2.2(a)	Reaction Procedure for the Oxidation of Styrene	116
4.2.2(b)	X-Ray Diffraction (XRD)	116
4.2.2(c)	Design of Experiment (DOE), Model Fitting and ANOVA	117

4.2.2(d)	Effect of Catalyst Concentration	121
4.2.2(e)	Effect of Reaction Time	121
4.2.2(f)	Effect of the H ₂ O ₂ /Styrene Ratio on Oxidation	125
4.2.2(g)	Effect of Temperature	125
4.2.2(h)	Optimization of styrene oxidation	129
4.2.2(k)	Solvent Effect	129
4.2.2(l)	Effect of Water Scavenging on Oxidation	132
4.3	Vanadium Oxide (V _x O _y) Supported on Multi-Walled Carbon Nanotubes (CNTs) (V _x O _y - CNTs) and □Al ₂ O ₃ Coated V _x O _y -CNTs	133
4.3.1	Catalyst Structure (TEM)	133
4.3.2	BET Surface Area	134
4.3.3	Infrared Spectroscopy (FT-IR)	135
4.3.4	Thermo Gravimetric Analysis (TGA)	138
4.3.5	Catalytic Oxidation	139
4.3.5(a)	Effect of the Composite Catalysts on Styrene Oxidation	139
4.3.5(b)	Effect of Reaction Time	140
4.3.5(c)	Effect of Reaction Temperature	141
4.3.5(d)	Effect of H ₂ O ₂ Concentration	142
4.3.5(e)	Effect of Solvent	142
4.3.5(f)	Optimization of Reaction Conditions	143
4.4	Characterization and Reaction of Catalytic Membrane	145
4.4.1	Mixed Matrix Vanadium Oxide Catalytic Nanocomposite (V _x O _y -CNTs) Membrane for Styrene Oxidation	145

4.4.1(a)	Effect of Ultrasonic Treatment on Coating of Membrane	145
4.4.1(b)	Zeta Potential and Particle Size of Al_2O_3	147
4.4.1(c)	Nitrogen Adsorption-Desorption Measurement	148
4.4.1(d)	Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM)	150
4.4.1(e)	Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM)	152
4.4.1(f)	Effect of Concentration of Al_2O_3 Sol and Binder	153
4.4.1(g)	Thermal Gravimetric Analysis (TGA)	156
4.4.1(h)	X-Ray Diffraction (XRD)	157
4.4.2	Styrene Oxidation using Catalytic Membrane	158
4.4.2(a)	Effect of Coating Time on Flux and Conversion	158
4.4.2(b)	Styrene oxidation: experimental set-up and analysis	161
4.4.2(c)	Design of Experiment (DOE)	161
4.4.2(d)	Effect of catalyst loading	163
4.4.2(e)	Effect of differential pressure	163
4.4.2(f)	Effect of the H_2O_2 /styrene ratio on oxidation	167
4.4.2(g)	Effect of temperature	170
4.4.3	Characterization and comparison of Mixed Matrix Vanadium Oxide Catalytic Nanocomposite (V_xO_y -CNTs, V_xO_y -NTs and $\text{V}_x\text{O}_y/\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ nano particle) Membrane for Styrene Oxidation	175
4.4.3(a)	<u>Nitrogen Adsorption-Desorption Measurement for Different Type of Membranes</u>	176
4.4.3(b)	Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM)	178
4.4.3(c)	Atomic Force Microscopic (AFM)	180
4.4.3(d)	Energy Dispersive X-ray Microanalysis (EDX)	181

4.4.3(e)	X-ray diffraction (XRD)	184
4.4.3(f)	Styrene oxidation comparison study with mixed matrix catalytic membrane prepared with different shape of catalyst	185
4.5	Kinetic Study of Styrene Oxidation	186
4.5.1	Kinetic Study of Styrene Oxidation with nanoparticle catalyst	186
4.5.2	Kinetic Study of Styrene Oxidation with mixed matrix catalytic membrane	192
CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		197
5.1	Conclusion	197
5.2	Recommendation	200
REFERENCES		202
APPENDIXES		231
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS		235

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1.1 Operating limits and restrictions for various membrane materials	8
Table 2.1 Industrial catalytic processes using vanadium oxides	39
Table 2.2 Conversion of styrene, product selectivity with different catalyst	43
Table 2.3 Conversion of styrene, product selectivity with vanadium base catalyst	46
Table 2.4 Catalytic membrane used for oxidation or epoxidation reaction	49
Table 2.5 Catalytic membrane used for styrene oxidation reaction	50
Table 3.1 List of materials and chemicals used in this study	54
Table 3.2 List of equipment used	55
Table 3.3 list of main components of the test rig	68
Table 3.4 Retention time for styrene oxidation of the GC	74
Table 3.5 Effective factors, upper and lower limit for styrene oxidation reaction	82
Table 4.1 Comparison of significant model parameters for styrene conversion and benzaldehyde selectivity	101
Table 4.2 The experimental data for the oxidation of styrene	103
Table 4.3 ANOVA table for styrene oxidation	104
Table 4.4 Limitations adjusted to reach the optimal value for styrene oxidation to benzaldehyde	114
Table 4.5 Styrene oxidation employing aqueous H ₂ O ₂ (30%) and anhydrous H ₂ O ₂	115
Table 4.6 Styrene oxidation employing various solvents	116

Table 4.7	The experimental data for styrene oxidation	119
Table 4.8	ANOVA table for styrene oxidation	120
Table 4.9	Limitations adjusted to reach the optimum value for styrene oxidation to benzaldehyde	129
Table 4.10	Styrene oxidation with various solvents base on selectivity %	131
Table 4.11	Styrene oxidation employing anhydrous H_2O_2 and the adsorption of reaction water with $MgSO_4$ base on yield%	132
Table 4.12	The surface area, pore diameter and pore volume of raw materials and catalysts	135
Table 4.13	Styrene oxidation employing various solvents	144
Table 4.14	Zeta potential and mean particle size sol ALOOH	148
Table 4.15	The surface area and pore volume of raw materials and catalysts	149
Table 4.16	Effect of binder and sol concentration on membrane appearance	155
Table 4.17	Amount of flux, conversion, benzaldehyde and styrene oxide selectivity with different time of coating by alumina sol include V_xO_y -CNTs catalyst	161
Table 4.18	Independent variables and their coded and actual values used in the response surface study	162
Table 4.19	The experimental data for the oxidation of styrene	168
Table 4.20	ANOVA table for styrene oxidation	169
Table 4.21	Limitations adjusted to reach the optimal value for styrene oxidation to benzaldehyde	175
Table 4.22	The surface area and pore volume of raw materials and catalysts	177
Table 4.23	Compared Mixed matrix catalytic membrane prepared from V_xO_y/CNT , V_xO_y -NTs and $V_xO_y/\square Al_2O_3$ nano particle for styrene oxidation and related flux with Differential pressure ($\square p$) between feed side and permeate side	186
Table 4.24	Amount of styrene conversion and selectivity at different catalyst and different time	190

Table 4.25	Amount of specific rate constant and activation energy for for benzaldehyde and styrene oxide	191
Table 4.26	Amount of styrene conversion, flux and selectivity at different differential pressure	195
Table 4.27	Amount of specific rate constant and activation energy for for benzaldehyde and styrene oxide on mixed matrix membrane	196

LIST OF FIGURES

	page
Figure 1.1 Effect of catalyst on a chemical reaction	3
Figure 1.2 Retainment of homogeneous catalysts	9
Figure 1.3 Extractor Membrane	10
Figure 1.4 Membrane reactors for distributed addition of a reactant	11
Figure 1.5 Membrane reactors for control of reactant contact	12
Figure 1.6 Schematic diagram showing the flow of reactants through a membrane operated as a (a) flow-through contactor, and around a catalyst bead from a (b) traditional fixed bed reactor	14
Figure 2.1 Important industrial organic chemicals produced by heterogeneous oxidation	26
Figure 2.2 Diagram for partial and complete oxidation reaction of hydrocarbon showing the profiles for enthalpies of total oxidation, ΔH_{TOx} and partial oxidation, ΔH_{POx} with the corresponding activation energy profiles for complete oxidation, E_{aTOx} and partial oxidation, E_{aPOx}	27
Figure 2.3 Coordination polyhedra: (a) Tetrahedron; (b) Square pyramid; (c) Octahedron ; (d) Triangular pyramid	35
Figure 2.4 Functionalization possibilities for SWNTs: A) defect-group functionalization, B) covalent sidewall functionalization, C) noncovalent functionalization with surfactants, D) noncovalent exohedral functionalization with polymers, and E) endohedral functionalization	51
Figure 3.1 Experimental work flowchart	56
Figure 3.2 Reaction of styrene oxidation	59
Figure 3.3 Schematic diagram of liquid permeation membrane test rig	71
Figure 3.4 Chromatogram of styrene and mixture of product	75
Figure 4.1 Schematic presentation of one layer formation V_xO_y -hexadecylamine	91

Figure 4.2	XRD pattern of V_xO_y -hexadecylamine duration of hydrothermal 5 days	92
Figure 4.3	FT-IR spectra of V_xO_y -NTs	93
Figure 4.4	TGA of V_xO_y -NTs produced by 5 days hydrothermal treatment	94
Figure 4.5	Adsorption/desorption isotherms of V_xO_y -NTs(5 days hydrothermal treatment)	95
Figure 4.6	Adsorption/desorption isotherms of (a) $\gamma-Al_2O_3$ (b) $V_xO_y/\gamma-Al_2O_3$	97
Figure 4.7	Pore size distribution of (a) $\gamma-Al_2O_3$ (b) $V_xO_y/\gamma-Al_2O_3$	98
Figure 4.8	XRD patterns of the V_2O_5 , Al_2O_3 and catalyst	99
Figure 4.9	EDX analysis of $V_xO_y/\gamma-Al_2O_3$ catalyst	100
Figure 4.10	Response surface plot showing the effect of catalyst amount and time and their mutual effect on (a) styrene conversion (b) interaction graph (c) predicted vs. actual	107
Figure 4.11	Response surface plot showing the effect of catalyst amount and time and their mutual effect on (a) benzaldehyde selectivity (b) Interaction Graph (c) predicted vs. actual	108
Figure 4.12	Response surface plot showing the effect of catalyst amount and time and their mutual effect on (a) styrene oxide selectivity (b) Interaction Graph (c) Predicted vs. actual	109
Figure 4.13	Response surface plot showing the effect of oxidant and temperature and their mutual effect on (a) styrene conversion (b) Interaction Graph (c) predicted vs. actual	111
Figure 4.14	Response surface plot showing the effect of oxidant and temperature and their mutual effect on (a) benzaldehyde selectivity (b) Interaction Graph (c) predicted vs. actual	112
Figure 4.15	Response surface plot showing the effect of oxidant and temperature and their mutual effect on (a) styrene oxide selectivity (b) Interaction Graph (c) predicted vs. actual	113
Figure 4.16	XRD patterns of the V_2O_5 , Al_2O_3 , fresh catalyst and catalyst after	117

reaction

Figure 4.17	Response surface plot showing the effect of catalyst and time and their mutual effect on (a) styrene conversion (b) Interaction Graph (c) predicted vs. actual	122
Figure 4.18	Response surface plot showing the effect of catalyst amount and time and their mutual effect on (a) benzaldehyde selectivity (b) Interaction Graph (c) predicted vs. actual	123
Figure 4.19	Response surface plot showing the effect of catalyst amount and time and their mutual effect on (a) styrene oxide selectivity (b) Interaction Graph (c) predicted vs. actual	124
Figure 4.20	Response surface plot showing the effect of oxidant and temperature and their mutual effect on (a) styrene conversion (b) Interaction Graph (c) predicted vs. actual	126
Figure 4.21	Response surface plot showing the effect of oxidant concentration and temperature and their mutual effect on (a) benzaldehyde selectivity (b) Interaction Graph (c) predicted vs. actual	127
Figure 4.22	Response surface plot showing the effect of oxidant and temperature and their mutual effect on (a) styrene oxide selectivity (b) Interaction Graph (c) Predicted Vs. Actual	128
Figure 4.23	FT-IR spectra of the catalysts: (a) V_xO_y -CNT / γ - Al_2O_3 , (b) V_xO_y -CNT, and (c) V_xO_y - Al_2O_3	137
Figure 4.24	TGA of the catalysts from room temperature to $900 \pm C$	138
Figure 4.25	Effect of catalyst concentration on styrene oxidation (reaction temperature of $60 \pm C$, reaction time of 4.5 h, and molar ratio of H_2O_2 /styrene of 2:1)	140
Figure 4.26	Effect of time on styrene oxidation (reaction temperature of $60 \pm C$, catalyst loading of 0.014 g/ml for V_xO_y / γ - Al_2O_3 and 0.008 g/ml for V_xO_y -CNT and V_xO_y -CNT/ Al_2O_3 , and molar ratio of H_2O_2 /styrene of 2:1)	141
Figure 4.27	Effect of temperature on styrene oxidation (reaction time of 5 h, catalyst loading of 0.014 g/ml for V_xO_y - Al_2O_3 and 0.008 g/ml for V_xO_y -CNT and V_xO_y -CNT/ γ - Al_2O_3 , and molar ratio of H_2O_2 /styrene of 2:1)	141
Figure 4.28	Effect of concentration of oxidant on styrene oxidation (reaction time of 5 h, catalyst loading of 0.014 g/ml for V_xO_y - Al_2O_3 and 0.008 g/ml for V_xO_y -CNT and V_xO_y -CNT/ Al_2O_3 , and reaction temperature of $60 \pm C$)	142

Figure 4.29	pore size distribution of unsupported membrane	150
Figure 4.30	Adsorption isotherms of unsupported sample	151
Figure 4.31	Weight loss curve for catalyst and unsupported membrane	157
Figure 4.32	XRD patterns of unsupported membrane with different condition of preparation	158
Figure 4.33	Response surface plot showing the effect of catalyst loading and differential pressure (Δp), and their mutual effect on the (a) styrene conversion (b) Interaction Graph (c) Predicted vs. actual	164
Figure 4.34	Response surface plot showing the effect of catalyst loading and differential pressure (Δp), and their mutual effect on the (a) benzaldehyde selectivity (b) Interaction Graph (c) Predicted vs. actual	165
Figure 4.35	Response surface plot showing the effect of catalyst loading and differential pressure (Δp), and their mutual effect on the (a) styrene oxide selectivity (b) Interaction Graph (c) Predicted vs. actual	166
Figure 4.36	Response surface plot showing the effect of oxidant and different temperature, and their mutual effect on the (a) styrene conversion (b) Interaction Graph (c) Predicted vs. actual	171
Figure 4.37	Response surface plot showing the effect of oxidant and different temperature, and their mutual effect on the (a) benzaldehyde selectivity (b) Interaction Graph (c) Predicted vs. actual	172
Figure 4.38	Response surface plot showing the effect of oxidant and different temperature, and their mutual effect on the (a) styrene oxide selectivity (b) Interaction Graph (c) Predicted Vs. Actual	173
Figure 4.39	FTIR spectra of polystyrene	174
Figure 4.40	Pore size distribution of unsupported membrane	177
Figure 4.41	Adsorption/desorption isotherms of unsupported sample	178
Figure 4.42	EDX analysis of membrane prepared (a) V_xO_y/CNT (b) V_xO_y -NTs (c) $V_xO_y/\square Al_2O_3$ nano particle	183
Figure 4.43	XRD patterns of unsupported membrane with different condition of preparation	185

Figure 4.44	Second order model for calculation reaction rate constants of the forward reactions at different temperature for oxidation of styrene with H_2O_2 using H_2O_2 /styrene molar ratio ($M=2$) with catalyst ($\text{V}_x\text{O}_y/\square\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$)	187
Figure 4.45	Second order model for calculation reaction rate constants of the forward reactions at different temperature for oxidation of styrene with H_2O_2 using H_2O_2 /styrene molar ratio ($M=2$) and catalyst (V_xO_y -CNT)	188
Figure 4.46	Second order model for calculation reaction rate constants of the forward reactions at different temperature for oxidation of styrene with H_2O_2 using H_2O_2 /styrene molar ratio ($M=2$) and catalyst (V_xO_y -CNT / $\square\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$)	188

LIST OF PLATES

	page
Plate 3.1 Sintering temperature profile for support	63
Plate 3.2 photograph of liquid permeation membrane test rig	67
Plate 3.3 Assembling the reactor (a) membrane cell and suitable O-ring(b) fixing of cell inside reactor(c) Insert the mesh ring back into the first reactor(d) insert the O-rings into their prescribed grooves(e) Insert the screws and fasten them(f) Install both the ceramic heater	72
Plate 4.1 SEM of V_xO_y -NTs at different hydrothermal synthesis time and ultrasonic condition (a) with- out ultrasonic condition and 5 days hydrothermal treatment (b)15 min ultrasonic and 5 days hydrothermal treatment (c,d) 30 min ultrasonic 5 days hydrothermal tratment (e) 30 min ultrasonic 2 days hydrothermal treatment (f) 30 min ultrasonic and 3 days hydrothermal treatment	89
Plate 4.2 TEM images of V_xO_y -NTs at different hydrothermal treatment synthesis time and ultrasonic condition (a) 2 days hydrothermal treatment (b) 3 days hydrothermal treatment (c) without ultrasonic 5 days hydrothermal treatment (d) 30min ultrasonic 5days hydrothermal treatment (e,f) multi-walled nanotubes produced from 5 days hydrothermal treatment with 30 min ultrasonic treatment	91
Plate 4.3 SEM images of V_xO_y NTs after reaction (a),(b) V_xO_y -NTs after 15 min reaction with mixture of H_2O_2 +Styrene(c),(d) V_xO_y -NTs after 60 min reaction with Styrene	96
Plate 4.4 TEM images of $\gamma-Al_2O_3$ impregnated with V_2O_5 (a) bulk of alumina nano particle (b) separate nano particle catalyst	98
Plate 4.5 TEM images of (a) MWCNTs (b,c) acid-treated MWCNTs, (d,e) MWCNTs coated with V_xO_y , (f) V_xO_y -CNTs coated with $\gamma-Al_2O_3$ sol	134
Plate 4.6 Effect of ultrasonic treatment on coating of membrane (a) surface of support before treatment (b) surface of support after treatment (c) coating with $AlOOH$ + PVA without any support treatment (d) coating with $AlOOH$ + PVA+PEG without any treatment on support(e) coating with $AlOOH$ + PVA after support treatment (f) coating with $AlOOH$ + PVA+PEG after support treatment	146

Plate 4.7	TEM images of (a)unsupported membrane PVA add to sol after peptization (b)unsupported membrane PVA add to sol before peptization (c)unsupported membrane PVA+PEG add to sol before peptization	152
Plate 4.8	SEM images of (a) membrane, PVA add to sol after peptization (b) membrane, PVA add to sol before peptization (c) membrane, PVA+PEG add to sol before Peptization	154
Plate 4.9	SEM images of (a) membrane with 0.01mol/l alumina sol concentration (b) membrane with 0.08 mol/l alumina sol concentration(c) membrane with 1wt% binder(d) membrane with 4wt% binder	156
Plate 4.10	Thickness of top layer with different of coating time (a) 6 sec (b)12 sec and(c)18 sec	160
Plate 4.11	surface of catalytic membrane (a) after reaction with temperature more than 65°C (b) used membrane after calcinations at 600 °C	174
Plate 4.12	SEM surface and cross section of (a,b)membrane with V _x O _y -CNTs (c,d) V _x O _y -NTs(e,f) V _x O _y / γ -Al ₂ O ₃ nano particles	180
Plate 4.13	AFM images of surface of membrane prepared with (a) V _x O _y -CNTs (b) V _x O _y -NTs(c) V _x O _y / γ -Al ₂ O ₃ nano particles take at 5 μ m*5 μ m	182

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

α -Al ₂ O ₃	Alfa-alumina
γ -Al ₂ O ₃	Gama-alumina
AFM	Atomic Force Microscopic
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
AlOOH	Boehmite
AAO	Porous anodic aluminum oxide
BET	Nitrogen adsorption analysis
Bza	Benzaldehyde
Bzac	Benzoic acid
CNT	Carbon nanotubes
CMR	Catalytic membrane reactor
CVD	Chemical vapor deposition
CNT/V _x O _y	Carbon nanotube/vanadium oxide
DOE	Design of experiment
EDX	Energy Dispersive X-ray
FT-IR	Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy
GC	Gas chromatography
GC-MS	Gas chromatography-mass spectroscopy
H ₄ NO ₃ V	Ammouium metavanadate
h	Hours
min	Minutes
MWCNTs	Multi wall carbon nano tube
NT	Nano tube

PEG	Polyethylene glycol
PVA	Polyvinyl alcohol
Pha	Phenylacetaldehyde
PPM	Porous polymeric material
PVP	Polyvinylpyrrolidone
PEI	Polyethylenimine
Phed	1-phenylethane-1,2-diol
RSM	Response surface methodology
SO	Styrene oxide
SEM	Scanning electron microscopy
TEM	Transmission electron microscopy
TIVO	Triisopropoxy vanadium
TGA	Thermal gravimetric analysis
TEOS	Tetraethoxysilane
TMOS	Tetramethoxysilane
VOC	Volatile organic carbon
TS-1	Titanium silicalite-1
X_xO_y	Vanadium oxide ($VO, V_2O_3, V_2O_5, V_6O_{13}$)
$V_xO_y/\square Al_2O_3$	Vanadium oxide impregnated $\square Al_2O_3$
V_xO_y -NTS	Vanadium oxide nanotubes
V_xO_y / CNT	Vanadium oxide impregnated CNT
XRD	X-ray Diffractometer
1D	One-dimensional

LIST OF SYMBOLS

Symbols	Descriptions	Unit
r_{st}	rate of reaction	mol/(L h)
τ	time	h
A	pre exponential factor	
t	time	h
T	absolute temperature	K°
S	catalyst surface area	m ²
X_{st}	styrene conversion to benzaldehyde	
X_{st0}	initial styrene conversion to benzaldehyde	
$X_{oxidant0}$	initial oxidant conversion to benzaldehyde	
M	molar ratio of oxidant (H ₂ O ₂) and styrene	
k_0	specific rate of reaction	L/(mol h)
k_s	overall rate constant	L/(mol h)
$C_{oxidant0}$	initial oxidant (H ₂ O ₂) concentration	mol/L
C_{st0}	initial styrene concentration	mol/L
EA	activation energy	cal/(mol K)
e	Error	
l	Thickness of coating	m
p	product	
R^2	Coefficient of determination	
E	Activation energy	cal/mol
R	gas constant	
V_{pore}	pore volume	m ³
V_{mem}	membrane volume	m ³
\square	membrane porosity	
F	Solution Flux	lm ⁻² h ⁻¹

MEMBRAN PEMANGKIN KOMPOSIT NANO VANADIUM OKSIDA SECARA MATRIKS BERCAMPUR UNTUK PENGOKSIDAAN STIRENA

ABSTRAK

Pengoksidaan sebatian olefin kepada epoksida atau oksida setara dengan menggunakan pemangkin logam oksida adalah satu langkah penting dalam pembuatan bahan kimia gred tinggi dan farmaseutikal dalam kuantiti yang besar. Penggunaan vanadium oksida sebagai pemangkin logam oksida mendapat perhatian khusus disebabkan keadaan pengoksidaannya dari +2 hingga +5 dan kepelbagaian sifat kimia stereo dengan julat koordinasi dari empat hingga lapan; menjadikannya logam oksida yang menarik dalam pengoksidaan olefin.

Struktur nano tersusun logam oksida seperti pertumbuhan logam oksida pada dinding tiub karbon nano (CNTs) adalah menarik dalam pemangkinan disebabkan luas permukaan tentu yang tinggi dan sifat-sifat uniknya. CNT terbenam vanadium oksida dijangka menghasilkan bahan komposit baru dengan sifat-sifat fizikal dan ciri-ciri pemangkin yang dipertingkatkan.

Kememilihan tertingkat dalam tindak balas pengoksidaan boleh dicapai melalui pemangkin matriks bercampur dan reka bentuk reaktor. Penggunaan reaktor membran bermangkin memudahkan persentuhan bahan-bahan tindak balas dalam fasa cecair. Dalam kerja ini, satu lapisan nipis membran bermangkin V_xO_y -CNT/ γ - Al_2O_3 ($\sim 1 \mu m$) telah disediakan dan dipantau dalam keupayaan pengoksidaan stirena. Logam oksida nanokomposit V_xO_y /CNT disediakan dengan kaedah pembentungan basah, kemudiannya diurai dalam sol $AlOOH$. Selepas itu, ia disalut pada permukaan penyokong menggunakan kaedah sol-gel. Faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi penyediaan salutan tanpa kecacatan seperti jenis pengikat, masa untuk menambah pengikat ke dalam sol dan rawatan permukaan penyokong telah

dikaji. Membran tiada penyokong dan berpenyokong telah dicirikan dengan menggunakan teknik-teknik seperti SEM, TEM, FTIR, TGA, AFM, XRD dan penyerapan-penyahjerapan nitrogen.

Reka bentuk eksperimen (DOE) digunakan untuk mengoptimumkan pengoksidaan stirena dan pemilihan benzaldehid. Bagi membran pemangkin, keadaan pengoksidaan optimum boleh dicapai pada suhu tindak balas 45 °C, perbezaan tekanan separa 1.5 bar, nisbah mol H₂O₂/stirena 1.5:1 dan beban pemangkin 30%; di mana penukaran maksimum stirena 25.6% dan pemilihan benzaldehid 84.9%. Manakala keadaan optimum dengan pemangkin nanokomposit V_xO_y/γ-Al₂O₃ dicapai pada suhu tindak balas 62.74 °C, dalam tempoh 5.15 j, nisbah mol H₂O₂/stirena 2.7:1 dan beban pemangkin 0.34 g; di mana penukaran maksimum stirena 68.23% dan pemilihan benzaldehid setinggi 57.32%.

Ia adalah jelas bahawa pengoksidaan stirena boleh diperbaiki dengan menggunakan pemangkin komposit berasaskan vanadium oksida dengan menggunakan H₂O₂ kering sebagai agen pengoksidaan. Jenis pemangkin, struktur pemangkin dan keadaan tindak balas mempunyai pengaruh yang kuat ke atas pengoksidaan stirena. Tiub nano vanadium oksida yang disintesis melalui kaedah hidroterma mempunyai prestasi yang rendah akibat kemusnahan pengoksidaan. Walau bagaimanapun, kelemahan ini boleh diatasi dengan menggunakan CNTs sebagai acuan. Produk utama pengoksidaan stirena adalah benzaldehid. Dengan menggunakan V_xO_y-CNT/γ-Al₂O₃ sebagai membran pemangkin, penukaran stirena berkurangan tetapi pemilihan benzaldehid meningkat berbanding dengan serbuk nanokomposit disebabkan oleh pencegahan tindak balas sampingan. Membran boleh menghalang tindak balas sampingan dengan mengasingkan produk dari bertindak balas selanjutnya dengan H₂O₂.

MIXED MATRIX VANADIUM OXIDE CATALYTIC NANOCOMPOSITE MEMBRANE FOR STYRENE OXIDATION

ABSTRACT

The oxidation of olefin compounds to equivalent epoxides or oxides using metal oxides as catalyst is an important step in the manufacturing of large quantities of fine and pharmaceutical grade chemicals. The chemical property of vanadium as metal in its oxide state is of interest particularly in application during olefin oxidation. Well-defined metal oxide nanostructures on the walls of carbon nanotubes (CNTs) are attractive as catalyst in the oxidation reaction because of their high specific surface area and formation of novel composite material with enhanced physical and catalytic properties. In this work, a thin layer of V_xO_y -CNT/ γ - Al_2O_3 catalytic membrane (about 1 μ m) was prepared and observed for its styrene oxidation capability. Metal oxide nanocomposite V_xO_y /CNT was prepared by wet impregnation method dispersed in sol, $AlOOH$. It was then coated on the surface of support through sol-gel technique. Factors that affect the preparation of defect free coating such as type of binder, time for the addition of binder to sol and surface treatment of the support, were investigated. The physical and chemical properties of the unsupported and supported membrane were characterized using different techniques such as SEM, TEM, FTIR, TGA, AFM, XRD and nitrogen adsorption-desorption.

Design of experiments (DOE) was applied to optimize the styrene oxidation conversion and benzaldehyde selectivity using the prepared membrane and nanocomposite catalyst. The optimal oxidation conditions were achieved at reaction temperature of 45 $^{\circ}C$, partial pressure difference of 1.5 bar, molar ratio of H_2O_2 /styrene of 1.5:1 and loading of 30 wt. % catalyst on membrane. These

conditions resulted in maximum styrene conversion of 25.6% and benzaldehyde selectivity of 84.9%. In the case of nanocomposite catalyst ($V_xO_y/\square Al_2O_3$), optimum oxidation conditions were reaction temperature of 62.74 $^{\circ}C$, time of 5.15 h, molar ratio of H_2O_2 /styrene of 2.7:1 and catalyst loading of 0.34 g for maximal styrene conversion of 68.23% and maximum benzaldehyde selectivity of 57.32%.

The results showed that styrene oxidation was improved using vanadium oxide-based composite catalysts with anhydrous H_2O_2 as an oxidant. Vanadium oxide nanotube, synthesized through hydrothermal technique also has relatively poor performance due to the oxidative degradation of template. However, using CNTs as a template, the shortcoming of vanadium oxide nanotube was overcome. Thus, using V_xO_y -CNT/ $\square Al_2O_3$ as catalytic membrane decreased styrene conversion and increased benzaldehyde selectivity (main product of styrene oxidation). This showed effectiveness of membrane to prevent side reaction, and isolate the product from further reaction with H_2O_2 .

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Membrane Technology

Today, membrane processes are at the centre of resolve and settlement of many important industrial problems, such as water treatment and desalination, food and beverages, pharmaceutical and medical applications, gas separation, full cell, biochemical reactions and catalytic reactions (Mulder, 1996).

Membranes are barriers, permeable to one or more species in a mixture, which separate two distinct zones and create a driving force for components to move from one zone to the other. Even though systematic studies of membrane phenomena may be traced as early as 18th century, but not much of development was found until 20th century. The first commercially significant gas separation membranes were introduced only in 1979, but within 10 years a wide range of different types of gas separation membranes have been developed (Noble and Stern, 1995). Moreover, membranes found their first considerable application in the filtration of drinking water at the end of World War II. By 1960, the fundamentals of modern membrane science had been developed, however membranes were used in only a few laboratories and small, specialized industrial applications (Mark, 2004). About thirty years ago, membrane filtration was not economically feasible, because of the disability of precisely controlling the pore size and pore morphology and also the specific materials that were used to produce the membrane, were restricted, but now this problem is settled and membrane technology has been further developed.

The two most important, and often the most expensive chemical process are usually the chemical reaction and the separation of the product stream. Both the

process could be improved by the combination of these two operations into a single unit operation, leading to potential savings in energy and reactant consumption and reduced by-product formation (Strathmann, 2001). One promising way to accomplish this combination is the use of membrane separation and catalytic reaction together in a multifunctional reactor.

The idea of catalytic membrane was first suggested by Sun in 1987 (Sun and Khang, 2002) thereafter, Burggraf (Burggraaf, 1989) indicated that the modification of γ -alumina membrane as catalytic membrane is possible. Over the past two decades, interest in membranes as a functional component of a reactor has significantly increased (Aran et al., 2011; Caro et al., 2010; Felice et al., 2010; Julbe et al., 2001; Klose, 2004; Rodríguez et al., 2011; Takehira et al., 2004). Catalytic membrane reactor (CMR) is currently a challenging research subject in the field of membrane science and catalytic reaction engineering. Catalytic membrane reactor is one of the different membrane reactor configurations that are interesting because it could concurrently carry out two major operations: reaction and separation (Hsieh, 1991).

1.2 Application of Catalyst to Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Reactions

Catalysts are used in approximately 90% of chemical, petrochemical and material manufacturing, so it is necessary to produce catalytic materials that are efficient, reusable over many cycles, and suitable for a wide range of processes (Maurya et al., 2011a). Catalysts do not change the thermodynamics of reaction, but slightly alter the kinetics of the reaction by providing an alternative pathway between the initial and final state of chemical reaction.

As shown in Figure 1.1, energy barrier is lowered with the introduction of catalyst in the process resulting in a more complex pathway of reactions. Therefore, catalyst increases the reaction rate constant, k by decreasing the activation energy, E as given in the Arrhenius relationship $k = Ae^{-E/RT}$.

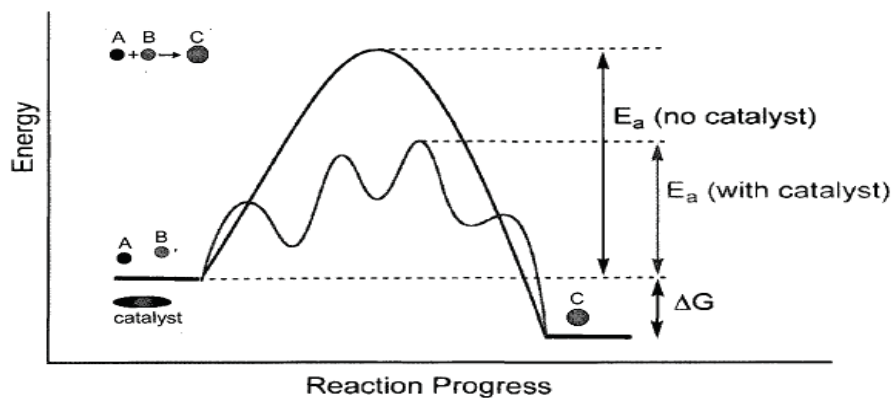


Figure1.1: Effect of catalyst on a chemical reaction

Catalysts are commonly classified as enzymatic, homogeneous and heterogeneous (Swiegers, 2008). Homogeneous catalysts are located in the same phase as the reactants, and involve the reactions taking place on a single active site. They are often comprised of single molecule. On the other hand, heterogeneous catalysts are solids, generally in the form of supported transition metals, which catalyze reactions of molecules in liquid or gaseous phases. As a result, heterogeneous catalysis takes place at an interface between a gas or liquid and a solid surface, where many different types of active sites like single atom or a group of atoms may be involved in the reaction. This might lead to a large number of products in spite of the fact that only one group might be desirable.

1.3 Nanoparticles Catalysis

The discovery of carbon nanotube (CNT) (Iijima, 1991) led to determining a unique structure for novel products, in addition to their physical properties and interesting shapes. There are several reports published on comprehensive development in synthetic routes and structure of nano-scaled materials and application of nano materials since 1991 (Ajayan, 1999; Cevc and Vierl, 2009). The synthesis of different kinds of inorganic nanomaterials was the motivation for chemists, physicists and material researchers to focus their attention toward the design of a variety of tubular or other types of structures containing nanoparticles (Jana et al., 2001; Shenton et al., 1999; Tremel, 1999).

The functionality of a heterogeneous catalyst depends critically on its structure over a length scales (Goodwin, 2004). Metal nanoparticles were likely observed over 2500 years ago (Daniel and Astruc, 2003). However, in the last 20 years, the study of nanoparticles has increased dramatically due to their unique size and properties. The interest for study and using nanoscale material is especially apparent in the field of catalysis because metal and metal oxide nanoparticles often show increases activity compared with their bulk metal counterparts (Okatsu et al., 2009; Polshettiwar et al., 2009). In heterogeneous catalysts, the favorable form of catalysts, are typically been stabilized or immobilized on different type of supporting material that will be discussed in detail as follow (Ishida et al., 2008).

1.4 Common Nanoparticle Supports

The efficient catalyst supports must have high surface areas to facilitate loading of the catalyst. In this section we discuss the various types of nanoparticle supports.

1.4.1 Metal Oxide Supports

Metal oxides are one of the most extensively employed catalyst supports since they offer high thermal and chemical stability. While they are in the form of zeolites, they as well have a well-defined pore structure and a high surface area. The surfaces of metal oxides can be simply functionalized, to simplify the procedure for catalyst deposition. The most common metal oxides used as catalyst supports are silica, alumina, titania, ceria, and zirconia.

Silica is normally used in catalytic reactions that require mild temperatures, $< 300\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$, because at higher temperatures, it is less stable and can produce volatile hydroxides. Alumina offers higher thermal and mechanical stability than silica, thus mainly used as metal oxide support. Alumina exists in a number of forms, but the two most common are γ -alumina and α -alumina. γ -Alumina is a highly porous, amorphous material that offers surface areas as high as $300\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ and pore sizes as small as 5 nm , on the other hand, α -alumina is a nonporous, crystalline solid that has a relatively low surface area ($3\text{-}5\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$). γ -alumina is highly stable even at temperatures as high as $1200\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ (Chorkendorff, 2003).

Silica and alumina are characteristically classified as inert materials, compared to other metal oxide supports such as titania, ceria, and zirconia which show reactive properties in certain reactions (Boaro, 2009; Han, 2009).

1.4.2 Carbonaceous Supports

Carbon materials offer a multiplicity of advantages as catalyst supports. Some carbon supports have surface areas as high as $1500\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ and pore sizes less than 1 nm , but graphitic carbon has a moderately low surface area. Much of the present research with carbon supported catalysts focuses on developing novel carbon

materials such as carbon nanotubes as catalyst supports (Satishkumar et al., 2000). Carbon nanotubes are unique substrates for catalyst immobilization because of their high surface area, unique physical properties and morphology, and high electrical conductivity. Additionally, their small size and hollow geometry facilitates the formation of small nanoparticles (typically 1 - 4 nm), which is ideal for catalysis.

1.4.3 Polymer Supports

As an option to conventional metal oxides and carbon, polymeric materials are attractive as nanoparticle supports because of their adaptability. Many polymeric materials contain heteroatom that can form complexes with metal nanoparticles, and the flexible structure of the polymers often makes them principally effective at stabilizing metal nanoparticles and preventing aggregation. Also, the variety of functional groups available in polymeric materials is almost unlimited. Some of the most common types of polymers used for nanoparticle immobilization include water soluble polyelectrolytes such as polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVP) and polyethylenimine (PEI) (Sun and Wang, 2003; Tsunoyama et al., 2008; Tsunoyama et al., 2005), polymeric microspheres (Liu, 2006), and ion exchange resins (Ishida, 2007; Shi, 2005).

1.4.4 Porous membranes as catalyst supports

As mentioned above, high surface areas result from a highly porous structure with comparatively small pore sizes, however small pores often exhibit high mass transport resistances during the catalytic reaction. Porous membranes, which can consist of virtually any ceramic or polymer material, offer a support configuration that provide several advantages over the conventional catalyst supports (Armor, 1995). One of the motivations for using membranes as catalyst supports is the ability

to catalyze reactions and perform separations at the same time. Also, membrane reactions can run continuously because the catalyst does not need to be separated from the reaction products, unlike batch and stirred tank reactors. The internal pores of the membrane also provide a large surface area that permits a high loading of the catalytic material.

1.5 Membranes Reactors

Common membrane materials can be separated into two main classes, polymeric (organic) and inorganic. The main limitations of polymeric membranes are their low operating temperatures and chemical stability. Inorganic membranes can operate at higher temperatures and are typically more chemically resistant. Table 1.1 lists a number of membrane materials (polymeric and inorganic) along with their maximum operating temperature and the suitable pH range. Inorganic membranes are generally more resistant to organic solvents and corrosive chemicals than the organic membranes, and are more suitable for use in most reaction systems due to their higher thermal and chemical stability.

The application of membranes in chemical reactors is motivated mostly by the synergy effect that is created by the preferential permeation of products (or reactants), leading to higher conversion and/or selectivity, and a potentially reduced downstream separation load. There has been an intense, worldwide effort on membrane reactors research since the 1980s and these efforts have been summarized in a number of recent review articles (Andric et al., 2010; Basile et al., 2006; Fong et al., 2008; Giorno and Drioli, 2000; Li et al., 2009; Mozia, 2009; Shu et al., 1991; Westermann and Melin, 2009).

Table 1.1: Operating limits and restrictions for various membrane materials (Hsieh, 1996)

Material	Maximum Operating Temperature (°C)	pH Range
Cellulose acetate	50	3-7
Aromatic polyamides	60-80	3-11
Fluorocarbon polymers	130-150	1-14
Polyimides	140	2-8
Nylons	150-180	*na
Polycarbonate	60-70	*na
Polyvinyl chloride	120-140	*na
Alumina	>900	0-14
Glass	700	1-9
Zirconia	400	1-14
Silver	370	1-14
Stainless steel(316)	>400	4-11

*na= not available

Depending on the configuration of membrane reactors, they may provide a number of other advantages as well. Catalytic membranes are typically divided into four categories: retainment of homogeneous catalysts, extractors, distributors, and contactors, which are discussed below in detail.

1.5.1 Retainment of Homogeneous Catalysts

Thermal recovery of homogeneous catalysts is regularly uneconomical due to low concentrations and can lead to deactivation of the catalyst. Retention of a homogeneous catalyst or precious smaller ligands, allowing the permeation of the residual reaction mixture could be achieved using membrane reactor as shown in Figure1.2. Membrane bioreactor for example, is particularly popular in bio catalytic applications (Giorno and Drioli, 2000; Westermann and Melin, 2009) and can be either realized by immobilizing the catalyst on the membrane surface or by a membrane filtration with a dissolved or dispersed catalyst.

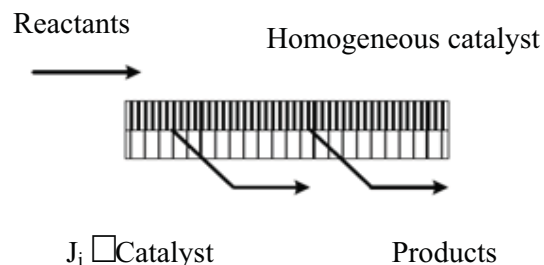


Figure 1.2: Retainment of homogeneous catalysts (Seidel-Morgenstern, 2010a)

1.5.2 Membrane Reactors for the Preferential Removal of a Species (Membrane Extractors)

The function of a membrane extractor is to selectively remove a product from the reaction mixture. In the late 1960s, researchers began to exploit the excellent separation capabilities of membranes for catalytic applications. The earliest work in this area employed membrane extractors to remove one or more of the products from the reaction to shift the equilibrium and increase its conversion. If the reaction is equilibrium-limited, the decreased activity of the species being removed will permit further conversion to occur, beyond that which would be possible if no species were removed. When reactions are limited by equilibrium, the membrane can continuously and selectively remove the product to shift the equilibrium.

Many of the initial studies with membrane extractors involved beneficial hydrogen removal in reactions such as hydrocarbon dehydrogenation (Collins et al., 1996; H₂ Klein et al., 2001), water gas shift (Criscuoli et al., 2001), and methane steam reforming reactions (Shu et al., 1994). Figure 1.3 shows a membrane reactor that preferentially removes a species from an equilibrium limited reaction and hence improving the reaction conversion.

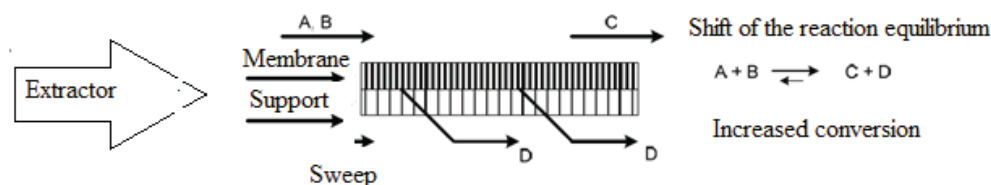


Figure 1.3: Extractor Membrane(Seidel-Morgenstern, 2010a)

1.5.3 Membrane Reactor for Distributed Addition of a Reactant (Membrane Distributors)

The idea of a distributed reactant feed is useful to systems with two competing reactions. A typical example is the partial oxidation of a hydrocarbon. Distributor membrane reactors present controlled addition of a reactant to the reaction mixture to limit side reactions and provide higher selectivity for the desired product. This may happen by simply controlling the amount of a reactant that is introduced on one side of the membrane, or by selectively allowing one component from a mixture to pass through the membrane and undergo reaction.

Figure 1.4 demonstrates the reaction of two components, A and B, to yield a product, C without the continued formation of D. As component B permeates through the membrane, it reacts with component A on the other side of the membrane to form product C. The reaction of B creates a concentration gradient within the membrane, which is the driving force for the continued permeation of B and subsequent reaction with A. Because B reacts with A immediately upon permeating through the membrane, very little side reactions occur to produce D. This principle is complicated by the change in residence time behavior of the reactants as one of them is fed gradually (Klose et al., 2003). The most common example of this type of reaction is the partial oxidation of hydrocarbons (K₂lsch et al., 2002). In these reactions, O₂ reacts more easily with the partially oxidized species than the

starting material. By controlling the addition of O_2 (B) to the hydrocarbon stream (A), complete oxidation can be limited.

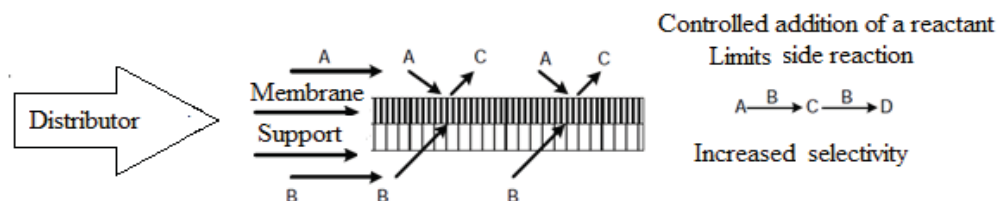
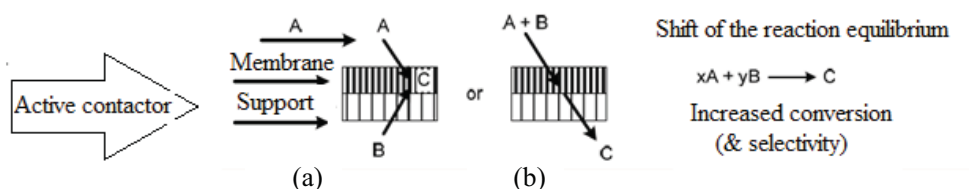


Figure 1.4: Membrane reactors for distributed addition of a reactant (Seidel-Morgenstern, 2010)

1.5.4 Membrane Reactors for Control of Reactant Contact (Membrane Contactors)

The newest form of catalytic membrane reactor is the membrane contactor, where the membrane acts as a support that brings the reactants into contact with the catalyst. In the case of extractors and distributors, the membrane is often catalytically inert and simply acts as a support with a fixed bed of catalyst on one side of the membrane. In that case, the membrane is solely responsible for the separation step, while the fixed catalyst bed is responsible for the reaction. Membrane contactors typically have catalyst deposited within the membrane pores, making them catalytically active, but they usually do not perform a separation function. Although, they do not fulfil the requirements for catalytic membrane reactors in the traditional sense (combining separation and reaction), most researchers in the field still characterize them as a form of catalytic membrane reactor. Membrane contactors are further classified into two categories in which the membrane acts as an interface between multiple phases (Figure 1.5 a) or the membrane is utilized for dead-end flow

where all the reactants pass through the catalytically active membrane pores (Figure 1.5 b) (Miachon et al., 2003).



Figur 1.5: Membrane reactors for control of reactant contact (Seidel-Morgenstern, 2010a)

1.5.4 (a) Interfacial Contactors

Interfacial contactors, which are also known as catalytic diffusers, exploit the membrane as a catalyst support to facilitate contact between reactants that are in multiple phases. The membrane could cause enhanced contact between the catalyst and the reactants. The common application for interfacial contactors is gas/liquid contacting for reactions such as hydrogenations or oxidations.

A gas/liquid contactor typically has the gas on the side of the membrane that has larger pores and the liquid on the side that contains more of the catalyst, which is usually the skin layer. The gas and liquid solutes then diffuse to the catalyst surface and react. Flow of the liquid and gas facilitates transport of reactants and removal of products from the reaction zone. This configuration was successfully applied to oxidize organic acids to CO_2 and H_2O (Miachon et al., 2003) and short chain alkanes to oxygenates (Espro et al., 2001). A number of studies had been carried out for hydrogenation of unsaturated substrates including cinnamaldehyde (Pan et al., 2000), methylenecyclohexane and sunflower seed oil (Bottino et al., 2002) with excellent success, in some cases achieving high selectivity for the desired product. There has

also been significant interest in using interfacial contactors for removal of nitrates from drinking water by hydrogenation (Reif and Dittmeyer, 2003).

The interfacial contactor configuration is also beneficial for forming contact between two liquid phases. The reactants diffuse into the pores from each side of the membrane and come into contact at the catalyst surface.

1.5.4(b) Flow-Through Contactors

Membranes operated as flow-through contactors act similarly to conventional fixed bed reactors. In traditional fixed bed reactors, the reactants need to diffuse into the pores of the support to react with the catalyst, but in flow through membrane contactors, convective mass transport rapidly brings the reactants to the active surface of the immobilized catalyst (Figure 1.6). If the pores are adequately small, radial diffusion will not limit reactions even at high flow rates where the contact time is very short. In this way, the pores of the membrane act as microreactors in which the reaction conversion can be controlled by simply adjusting the flow rate (Westermann and Melin, 2009). Flow-through contactors also have the advantage of constantly removing the products from the reaction zone. As a result, there will be less competition between products and reactants for active sites on the catalyst and a decreased possibility for the products to undergo side reactions or poison the catalyst surface.

The flow-through contactor configuration allows fine control over the residence time of reactants inside the membrane, which directly affects conversion. Even a single pass through the membrane yields nearly complete conversion in reactions such as volatile organic carbon (VOC) combustion or photocatalytic oxidation of organic compounds. However, a majority of previous experiments with

flow-through contactors passed the reactant mixture through the membrane multiple times to obtain complete conversion. Many of these studies focused on gas-phase hydrogenation or oxidation reactions (Kormann et al., 2004).

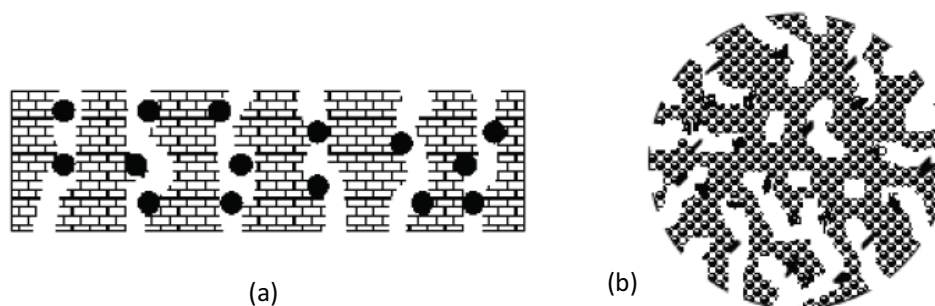


Figure 1.6: Schematic diagram showing the flow of reactants through a membrane operated as a (a) flow-through contactor, and around a catalyst bead from a (b) traditional fixed bed reactor.

The flow of gaseous mixture through the membrane very rapidly allows very short contact time, which results in partial hydrogenation of compounds such as acetylene, propyne, butadiene, and hexadiene (Groschel et al., 2005; Lambert and Gonzalez, 1999; Lange et al., 1998; Pelzer et al., 2003). The flow-through configuration is also beneficial for gas/liquid reactions where a limited amount of gas is able to dissolve in the liquid phase. Thus with each pass, the liquid solution can again be re-saturated with the gas. Schmidt and co-workers found that this strategy afforded high selectivity in the partial hydrogenation of a number of unsaturated organic compounds including cyclo-octadiene, 1-octyne, phenyl acetylene, and geraniol (Schmidt et al., 2005; Schmidt et al., 2008). Others had similar success with partial hydrogenation of sunflower oil (Bengtson and Fritsch, 2006; Fritsch and Bengtson, 2006; Schmidt et al., 2008) and α -methylstyrene (Purnama et al., 2006) and hydrogenation of nitrate for water denitrification (Ilinich et al., 2003; Reif and

Dittmeyer, 2003). The overall success of membrane reactors in restricting the extent of reaction could make them quite valuable in a number of applications.

1.6 Benzaldehyde Synthesis and Application

Benzaldehyde C_6H_5CHO , is the simplest and the most industrially useful member of the family of aromatic aldehydes. Benzaldehyde exists in nature, primarily in combined forms such as glycoside in almond, apricot, cherry, and peach seeds. The characteristic benzaldehyde odor from oil of bitter almond occurs because of trace amounts of free benzaldehyde formed by hydrolysis of the glycoside amygdalin. Amygdalin was first isolated in 1830 from the seeds of the bitter almond.

The only industrially important processes for the manufacturing of synthetic benzaldehyde involve the hydrolysis of benzalchloride and the air oxidation of toluene. The hydrolysis of benzalchloride, which is produced by the side-chain chlorination of toluene, is the older of the two processes. It is not utilized in the United States in Europe, India, and China. Other processes, including the oxidation of benzylalcohol, the reduction of benzoylchloride, and the reaction of carbon monoxide and benzene, have been utilized in the past, but they no longer have any industrial application(kirk-Othmer, 1999).

The air oxidation of toluene is the source of the majority of the world's synthetic benzaldehyde. Both vapor and liquid-phase air oxidation processes have been used. In the vapor phase process, a mixture of air and toluene vapor is passed over a catalyst consisting of the oxides of uranium, molybdenum, or related metals. High temperatures and short contact times are essential to maximize yields. Small amounts of copper oxide may be added to the catalyst mixture to reduce formation of by-product maleic anhydride. Conversion per pass is reported to be low, 10-20%,

with equally low yields, 30-50%. The vapor-phase oxidation of toluene was the dominant process in the 1950s and early 1960s, but is now of little industrial importance, thus paving way for the liquid-phase process. In the liquid phase process, both benzaldehyde and benzoic acid are recovered. This process was introduced and developed in the late 1950s by the Dow Chemical Company, as a part of their toluene-to-phenol process, and by Snia Viscosa for their toluene-to-caprolactam process (Kirk-Othmer, 1999). The benzaldehyde recovered from the liquid-phase air oxidation of toluene may be purified by either batch or continuous distillation.

1.7 Problem Statement

γ - Al_2O_3 has been widely studied for preparation and modification of catalytic membranes using the sol-gel method because these types of membranes can be used for oxidation reaction purposes (Alfonso et al., 2000; Bottino et al., 2005b). γ - Al_2O_3 membranes are typically supported on macro porous γ - Al_2O_3 tubes or disks in the sol-gel method; they are dip or spin coated with a boehmite (AlOOH) precursor to improve conversion or selectivity (Xia et al., 1996).

However, when AlOOH is applied, the surface on which γ - Al_2O_3 is catalytically embedded must be free of cracks after calcination. Therefore, choosing a suitable binder that can be burned off in the calcination step without negative side effects on the catalyst or membrane is important. Although catalytic membranes with different shapes, catalyst loadings and binders have been prepared and tested in commercial ceramic support structures (Alfonso et al., 1999; Alfonso et al., 2002; Teixeira et al., 2011), to the best of our knowledge, no studies on the use of vanadium oxide (V_xO_y) supported on multi-walled carbon nanotubes (CNTs) or

vanadium oxide NTs for styrene oxidation in catalytic membranes have been investigated. The reason is because no suitable and effective catalyst has been developed for this purpose.

The large surface area $1315 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ for SWNTs, outstanding thermal conductivity ($3000 \text{ W}/(\text{K m})$) and chemical and mechanical stabilities of CNTs, make them promising for the development of advanced composite materials that undergo catalytic oxidation reactions (Chen et al., 2007b). As a result of their amazing properties, CNTs have been introduced into many host materials, including polymers, metals and ceramics, to improve the overall properties of CNT composite systems (Sharma et al., 2010; Thostenson et al., 2001).

The growth of metal oxides on the walls of carbon nanotubes (CNTs) is a common technique for preparing composite materials (Neri et al., 2010). The use of vanadium oxide nano-structures as metal oxide catalysts is of particular importance because vanadium oxides can be used for the partial oxidation or dehydrogenation of alkanes to olefins (Ledoux et al., 2001; Weckhuysen and Keller, 2003a; Xu et al., 2002). Therefore, blends of vanadium oxides and CNTs are expected to produce novel composite materials with enhanced chemical and physical properties (Chen et al., 2007b).

Embedding carbon nanotubes and vanadium oxides into $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ poses several critical challenges that must be overcome to capture the full potential of CNT composites. The uniform dispersion of CNTs in the host matrix material is essential. As a result of van der Waals forces, CNTs are likely to form agglomerates or bundles instead of individual tubes, and this can produce defects in composite membranes. The second main challenge is associated with strengthening the interaction between

CNTs and the host matrix to produce stable composite materials that are capable for the styrene oxidation at relatively short time.

The oxidation of olefin compounds to equivalent epoxides or oxides is an important step in the manufacturing of large quantities of fine- and pharmaceutical-grade chemicals (Lutz, 1980). For example, the oxidation of terminal alkenes, such as styrenes, is difficult and necessitates longer reaction times (Coperet et al., 1997). Styrene oxide and benzaldehyde are typically manufactured by oxidizing styrene, with stoichiometric amounts of peracids as the oxidizing agent (Swern, 1971). Styrene oxidation in the presence of H_2O_2 is widely used in the production of two significant products, Styrene oxide and benzaldehyde (Al-Ajlouni et al., 2008; Hulea and Dumitriu, 2004b; Selvaraj et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2005). To the best of the authors' knowledge, no studies on benzaldehyde production with V_xO_y -CNT as the catalyst and V_xO_y -CNT/ γ - Al_2O_3 as the catalytic membrane have been investigated.

The selective oxidation of styrene is particularly difficult, because it is a kinetically rapid reaction, so it is of great importance to control the reaction to avoid side reactions. The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of a short contact time reactor in order to maximize production selectivity and protected from producing side reaction products. In particular, maximizing the concentration of benzaldehyde from styrene and restricting the formation of by product is important industrially. To do this, γ - Al_2O_3 pellet was dip coated in V_xO_y /CNT bohemite solution to form a gel and then calcined to form a thin layer of V_xO_y /CNT / γ - Al_2O_3 catalyst. A mixture of styrene/ H_2O_2 /acetone was fed and the conversion and benzaldehyde selectivity results were measured.

From the above discussion, it was found that benzaldehyde has many industrial applications as listed above. It can be produced via styrene oxidation. Styrene oxidation generates many side reactions which lead to large amount of by products. Also, the reaction takes a long time to reach completion using powder catalyst. In most studies, styrene oxidation requires temperature over and above 60 °C and more importantly is the production of environmentally unfriendly substances from the usage of peroxy acid such as tetra butyl hydrogen peroxide or other oxidants which are corrosive and hazardous.

Therefore, to overcome these challenges, catalytic membrane was developed as alternative to powder catalyst which can produce benzaldehyde as well as separates the products during reaction through the membrane. It can be inferred in this study that the developed catalyst performs dual function (enhancement of the reaction and separation). Secondly, H_2O_2 as an oxidant, though has been applied in other processes, but there is no information about the use of H_2O_2 as oxidant in catalytic membrane to produce styrene oxide and benzaldehyde. Above all, energy required during the reaction was successfully reduced by lowering the temperature to 40 °C which clearly showed the activity and efficiency of the developed catalytic membrane.

1.8 Research Objectives

The present research has the following objectives:

- 1- To develop and synthesize vanadium oxide nano structure composite catalyst and mixed matrix nanocomposite membrane
- 2- To characterize the developed nanostructure composite catalyst and mixed matrix nanocomposite membrane with suitable analytical techniques
- 3- To investigate the performance of nanostructure composite catalyst and catalytic membrane for styrene oxidation and obtain an optimum operating conditions for the reaction
- 4- To study the reaction kinetics of styrene oxidation

1.9 Scope of the Study

In this study, the main objective is to develop a suitable vanadium oxide base catalytic membrane for styrene oxidation to benzaldehyde. For this purpose, different shape of vanadium oxide base nanoparticle catalyst and Mixed Matrix catalytic membrane were tested.

The overview of research activities carried out as following:

1.9.1 Synthesis and Characterization of Nanocomposite Catalyst

Different types of nanostructure catalyst were synthesized by hydrothermal and impregnation methods. Hydrothermal method was applied for preparation of vanadium oxide nanotube from vanadium pentoxide and hexadecylamine precursor. Aluminum tri-sec-butoxide ($\text{Al}(\text{C}_3\text{H}_7\text{O})_3$), MWCNTs and NH_4VO_3 were used for impregnation method and synthesis of $\text{V}_x\text{O}_y/\text{CNT}$ and $\text{V}_x\text{O}_y/\square\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$. The catalysts were characterized using XRD, SEM, TEM, FT-IR, TGA and Nitrogen adsorption-desorption.

1.9.2 Synthesis and Characterization of Mixed Matrix Vanadium oxide Catalytic Nanocomposite Membrane

Mixed matrix vanadium oxide catalytic nanocomposite membrane was synthesized using sol-gel method. Three type of nanocomposite catalyst (1) V_xO_y /CNT, (2) VO_x -NTs, (3) nanoparticle size $V_xO_y/\square Al_2O_3$ were first add inside sol alumina then membrane were synthesized using dip coating method and sol-gel process. The membranes were characterized using XRD, SEM, TEM, FT-IR, TGA, Nitrogen adsorption-desorption, AFM and EDX.

1.9.3 Design and Fabrication of Liquid Permeation Membrane Test Rig

A liquid permeation test rig was designed and fabricated for determining the performance of disc type membrane. The test rig was designed for styrene oxidation reaction with H_2O_2 as oxidant using mixed matrix vanadium oxide catalytic nanocomposite membrane at different operating conditions. The operating parameters that can be adjusted using this test rig include feed flow rate, gas flow rate, temperature and vacuum sweep gas pressure.

1.9.4 Kinetic Study

A simple kinetic study for the oxidation reaction of styrene using nanocomposite catalyst and mixed matrix nanocomposite membrane was studied to obtain its kinetic model and the activation energy was calculated using Arrhenius equation. This was done in order to obtain parameters for the purpose of reactor design in commercialization.

1.10 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis consists of five chapters as listed in table of contents. A brief introduction on catalyst, membrane and catalytic membrane technology are included in chapter 1 (Introduction). At the end of this chapter, problem statements that provide basis and rationale to justify the research direction in the current study are highlighted. Based on the problem statement; the specific objectives of the research are together with the research scope.

Chapter 2 (Literature Review) presents literature review on the oxidation of hydrocarbon and styrene oxide with different types of catalyst, oxidation of hydrocarbon with vanadium base catalyst, application of catalytic membrane for oxidation of hydrocarbon. The recent developments for synthesis CNT, functionalization of CNT, vanadium oxide nano tube, are presented.

Chapter 3 (Materials and Methods) presents the detail of materials and chemicals used in the present study. This is followed by the detailed experimental procedures, which include the membrane preparation method, characterization methods and analytical techniques. The synthesis method for membrane support and sol-gel derived catalytic membrane is discussed in detail, which includes the preparation of catalytic nanocomposite template. The characterization method for membrane physicochemical properties such as thermogravimetric behavior, type of interatomic bond, crystalline phase and porous structure are also outlined in chapter3. Details of the experimental set up are also elaborated in this chapter.

Chapter 4 (Results and Discussion) is the core of this thesis, which address the five objectives as listed in chapter1. The results of the experimental are subdivided into six sections. The first section presented the characterization of nanocomposite catalyst. This is followed by the performance of nanocomposite in

styrene oxidation. Design of Experiment (DOE) approach is applied to determine the optimum operation process variables. The third section presented the characterization of membranes. This is followed by the performance of membrane in styrene oxidation base on Design of Experiment (DOE) for determination of optimum operation process variable. In the final section, the simple kinetic study for styrene oxidation based on different kind of nanocomposite catalyst and catalytic membrane are presented.

Chapter five (Conclusions and Recommendations) concludes all the major finding obtained in the present study. At the end of the thesis, suggestion and recommendations to improve the present research work as well as the future direction of the research are presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Hydrocarbons

Today there are more than 30,000 specialty chemicals produced industrially from approximately 300 intermediate chemicals (Moulijn, 2001). The enormous majority of these intermediates are produced from an extremely limited number of approximately 20 simple base chemicals for example, ethylene, butane, ammonia, methanol, propylene, sulfuric acid and chlorine.

Hydrocarbons are an integral part of our global economy and are utilized as fuels, commodity chemicals, specialty chemicals, intermediates and final product. Production of most hydrocarbons begins with the refining of petroleum followed by further treatment in petrochemical plants to produce the desired hydrocarbon product. Functionalizing hydrocarbons broadens their uses to include fuels, polymers, specialty and commodity chemicals, and various other industries. Oxygenated products are a valuable part of these hydrocarbon derived products and their production relies heavily on catalytic selective oxidation reactions (Cavani and Trifiro, 1997; Grasselli, 2002; Grasselli et al., 2003).

In spite of the long history of chemical reaction engineering there are still many problems which are not solved in an acceptable manner (Levenspiel, 1999). This problem lies in the fact that during the synthesis of a certain target component usually undesired parallel or consecutive reactions occur which reduce the achievable yields. Therefore, there is considerable interest in developing technologies which allow increasing the selectivity and yield with which a certain target product can be generated. It is well known that the selectivity in reaction networks towards a target compound can be increased following various concepts.

First, a careful selection of the reaction temperature can be made to favor the formation of the target. Second, applying dedicated catalysts which accelerate specifically the desired reaction (Ertl, 2008). The third approach, exploits the fact that the selectivity with respect to a certain preferred product can be increased by properly adjusting the local concentrations of the reactants involved (Seidel-Morgenstern, 2010b).

2.2 Selective Oxidation of Hydrocarbons

The addition of oxygen to hydrocarbons is the simplest method to functionalize a hydrocarbon. Oxidation of hydrocarbons to alcohols, aldehydes, epoxide and acids comprise the largest category of catalytic organic reactions and almost all monomers in manufacturing are obtained by catalytic oxidation processes (Haber, 1996). Oxidation reactions in the chemical sector are made much more selective in nature by means of a catalyst which lowers the activation energy for the selected process and produces the useful products. Figure 2.1 shows the important industrial organic chemicals produced by heterogeneous oxidation.

Oxidation processes present a significant challenge as the selective oxidation reactions struggle with the combustion reactions. Haber has identified the following as the most important factors in the selective oxidation of hydrocarbons (Haber et al., 1992):

1. Thermodynamics favour the formation of water and carbon dioxide in hydrocarbon oxidation, consequently kinetic control of the reaction is required for the formation of partial oxidation products.
2. Hydrocarbon-oxygen mixtures facilitate multiple series and parallel reaction pathways to occur and then the catalyst must control the relative rates of each